

The subject of Net Neutrality is of such great importance to the future of communications, commerce, free markets and free speech that I am compelled to register my opposition to any proposal that would allow communication infrastructure and/or service providers to control the types and quality of service they provide to a given entity. Allowing service providers to decide what data they will carry, from whom and at what level of priority creates a dangerous precedent. Permitting any service provider to decide the level of service they will provide on a pay-per-use basis, creates an unfair advantage for larger content providers who will have deeper pockets and can buy more access to the networks. Such a scheme will create an environment in which the “big players” will have a great advantage over the small innovators, staunching the free flow of ideas and squashing innovation

Further, it is conceivable that any mechanism that sanctions the preferential handling of data could be used to control any speech that is in opposition to the opinions held by a service provider anywhere between the end-user and the content provider. Imagine an environment where a phone call from a large, corporate customer is provided at a higher quality of voice than a call from a local business. Such a scenario is conceivable when voice traffic is finally recognized as just another form of data on the network. How can the open flow of information occur when any segment on the network carrying that information can decide what priority it wishes to assign that flow? Surely, the enforcement of consistence behavior across all segments is so complex as to be impossible. Also, under such a scheme, the service providers are put in a position where they can “shake down” a content provider for revenue in return for access.

The number and types of service available on the Internet will certainly be growing in ways that are not predictable. The development of these services must be allowed to occur organically, in a market context that allows all players to innovate and none to stifle that innovation.

The Internet must remain a regulated, public good that cannot be placed under the control or influence of large entities. I would liken the prospect to placing deferential access to the interstate highway system based upon one’s ability to pay for the faster lanes. Let the users decide what they feel is important and what they want to access. Leave the Internet free and open. The maintenance of a neutral, open data communications network is critical to the future of commerce, entertainment and the free and open exchange of ideas that. Reject any legislation that undermines Net Neutrality!